

# LEARNING TO LISTEN

## A PRAYER PRACTICE

HEARING GOD WEEK ONE

### 1 PREPARE

Begin by closing your eyes and taking a deep breath in and a long breath out. Do that several times slowly—a deep breath in, and a long breath out.

Pause and notice all the things that could be distracting while you do this practice – sounds, sensations in your body, wandering thoughts. Simply notice these and acknowledge with kindness that there are lots of ways to get distracted! Then, when distractions do come, simply redirect your attention back to your breath, to God’s presence, or to the prompt at hand.

Close your eyes again and begin with a brief prayer asking God to help you trust that he is speaking and to give you ears to hear his voice. Take time to confess any unbelief and ask God for anything else specific that might help you tune in to hear his voice today.

### 2 READ + PRAY

*Lectio Divina* is a latin phrase meaning “divine reading”. It is a prayer practice that involves a slow, repetitive reading of Scripture that makes space to give attention to your own internal thoughts and wonderings, as well as the Spirit’s promptings, alongside the Scripture itself.

To do this practice, you’ll read **John 10:1-10** aloud three times slowly using the following prompts:

- As you read the first time, simply listen openly and let the words wash over you. Don’t read for analysis or try to grab onto any specific word or idea.
- As you read the second time, notice what word(s) or phrase(s) stand out to you. Don’t overthink this; simply notice.
- As you read the third time, hold the word(s) or phrase(s) that stood out to you at the forefront of your mind and ask God, “*What is this passage saying to me personally?*”

#### **John 10:1-10 NIV, The Good Shepherd and His Sheep:**

*Jesus said: “Very truly I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice... Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

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### 2 READ + PRAY, CONT'D

After you've read the passage three times slowly using the prompts above, prayerfully reflect on the following questions. You may want to write down your responses in a journal:

- Notice in this passage how Jesus talks about different potential voices in our lives. Consider for a moment all of the different voices in your life - your friends, coworkers, a boss, a sibling, your own voice.
- What is the message of these voices in your life? What are they often saying to you? Do these messages bring life, or do they tend to steal, kill, or destroy?
- If Jesus is the Good Shepherd and God's voice is one of loving care and protection, what might the Good Shepherd be wanting to say to you today? Pause and ask him: *"Jesus, what are you wanting to say to me today?"*

### 3 LISTENING PRAYER

Remain in this posture of listening and shift your focus to ask God a few more questions. These are called Friendship Questions because they help us listen to God about how he sees us and feels toward us.

Often we don't hear God's voice because we don't ask him specific or direct open-ended questions. When we make space to do this, it can be stunning how quickly and clearly God responds!

For each question below, close your eyes and ask the question directly to God in your mind and heart. Pause for at least 30 seconds after asking, and then simply notice what comes into your mind. Trust that whatever does come into your mind—an image, a word, a sense of something—might be from God. If something seems odd or confusing, ask God to help you understand what it is or what it means.

#### Friendship questions:

- *"God, what do you see when you look at me?"*
- *"God, what brings you pleasure about me?"*
- *"God, am I carrying anything I shouldn't be? Anything I need to give over to you? If so, is there something you want me to do?"*

Take a moment to write down anything you sensed or heard, and any lingering thoughts or questions you have. Close this time of prayer with your own words to God.